

### Transcript: Absence of Monuments Part 3

(Second part of an interview conducted over Zoom, interviewers Marvin and Margarethe, interviewee Dr. Lorna Bracewell)

Marvin: Basically, we've talked about the absence of queer history and monuments, specifically in this context; what do you think it signifies when there is an absence of monuments?

Lorna: I think that it can be a kind of measure of the value that a community places on that piece of history, or the people who experienced it. I think there's also other information reflected there. I was talking earlier about how to remember takes effort and work. So in some cases the failure to memorialize or to remember may not be an intentional act of devaluation or denigration, it could just be because the community to whom that history matters hasn't prioritized commemorating it, or come together and channeled energy and resources into commemorating it. I think it can- if you see a place where that history is not reflected, it can be a sign of political disorganization or fragmentation or weakness.

Margarethe: Do you think that it is an issue that there are so little monuments dedicated to queer people and why?

Lorna: I do! I'd love to see more. I think that the LGBTQ+ community is a community that has been despised and oppressed for a very long time and I think building monuments to commemorate their history and their story and their experience is a really important sign of respect, a gesture of reparation, so yeah, I would love to see more and I think it is really, again, politically important. And it would also help with this political work that I've been talking about where as a movement we need to remember and monuments and memorials are mnemonic devices, they are aids in remembering, so I think they would politically strengthen our movement as well.

I think monuments and memorials can be an important way to counter that enforced ignorance that is such an important but underrated part of how oppressive systems work.

Marvin: I really like the divide brought up in all of your answers so far about how dark the queer history is, and I think this kind of leads into the next question, because you've also talked about hopeful the queer community remains. Do you think that remembrance culture should move into a more hopeful light, especially for queer people? Or should it not move into a brighter light?

Lorna: I think that- I think it's important to remember our victories and our triumphs, and I think we're more inclined. Nobody remembers the worst day of their life, but everybody remembers, y'know like, whatever y'know, greeting their newborn baby into the world, or whatever people tie-, these significant events that people talk about, it's always good stuff, graduation, y'know. So I think it is important to commemorate and celebrate our victories and our successes and our triumphs, and I know you wanna end on a hopeful note, but I'm like- I'm so worried that that kind of inbuilt bias we have towards remembering the good stuff results in us forgetting the struggle, the work, the organizing, the tediousness that had to happen for the triumph to occur. This happens constantly with civil rights history, there's this like- 'Rosa parks refused to give up her seat on the bus and then America wasn't racist anymore'. We oversimplify the dark, difficult parts of history and I think that's very pernicious and bad, so I do think it's important to celebrate our successes and commemorate our triumphs and the history of LGBTQ+ people is not just this veil of tears or whatever, but we need to do a better job of remembering the struggle and the work and the effort it took to achieve those victories. I would hate for there to be monuments to like, I was talking earlier about Lorenz V Texas, like an 'and then the brave and noble justices on the supreme court saw the error in their ways and now we have LGBTQ+ rights', I would hate- I would rather have no monuments, than have that kind of monuments. I want monument that reflect our history in a complete holistic way, words and all.

Marvin: We like that answer, especially when you look at today, and just - by today I don't mean this specific day, but the time we live in right now. It is a hopeful time, yes, but it's also a very scary time as has been brought up times before in this interview, so I think it's a very fair answer to want to include everything.

Lorna: This isn't the first time it's been scary, we should also remember that, that can help. There's a lot of despair and hopelessness, I see it on the faces of the young queer people that I teach. This is a dark time, but it's not the first time our people have confronted darkness and we have overcome. I mean, it's cliché, but it's true. So it's important to remember this is not the first effort by these reactionaries to stuff us back into the closet or deny us rights to bodily autonomy and self-determination. This has been happening for centuries and we have been fighting and struggling for centuries and persisting, and not only that, we've been thriving and we've been- whatever, dancing on the back of Deutsche Bank (?) floats and drinking our overpriced cocktails, like, all that, y'know, has happened in the midst of great struggle and that's why it's important to remember those bleak spots too, because it helps us, it reassures us that we can endure, we can survive, we can resist.